

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 0193

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, DA

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER HARTLING

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER HARTLING SHORTLY AFTER MY RETURN IN ORDER TO BRING HIM UP TO DATE ON MY DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO HIS VISIT, AND TO OBTAIN HIS ESTIMATE OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION.

2. I FOUND THE PRIME MINISTER STILL KEEN ON VISITING THE US THIS YEAR. HE REALIZES THAT A VISIT IN FEBRUARY, FOR WHICH HE HAD ORIGINALLY HOPED, DOES NOT NOW SEEM PRACTICAL. HE EXPLAINED TO ME THAT THERE WERE TWO URGENT PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE HIS REMAINING CLOSE TO THE SCENE UNTIL THE END OF MARCH. THE FIRST OF THESE WAS THE ANNUAL WAGE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE COMMENCED BUT GOTTEN NOWHERE. THE NATIONAL WAGE CONTRACT EXPIRES ON MARCH 1 ALTHOUGH THE NATIONAL MEDIATOR COULD EXTEND THE DEADLINE TWO WEEKS. IF THERE IS NOT A SETTLEMENT BY THIS ULTIMATE DATE IN MID-MARCH THERE WILL BE SERIOUS STRIKES. THE SECOND MAJOR CONSIDERATION IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S MIND IS THAT THE ANNUAL BUDGET MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF MARCH. HARTLING SAID WITH A FAINT SMILE THAT, PROVIDED HE GETS OVER BOTH THESE HURDLES, HE SHOULD KNOW BY THE FIRST OF APRIL WHETHER HIS GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE. HAVING REVIEWED THE SITUATION FOR ME, HE CONCLUDED THAT APRIL WOULD BE A GOOD MONTH FOR HIM TO

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VISIT THE US. I SAID THAT WE WOULD SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE.

3. AS TO THE PRESENT CONFUSED POLITICAL SITUATION, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT DENMARK WOULD BE BETTER OFF IF IT HAD ANOTHER LABOR PARTY RATHER THAN THE ONE IT HAS. DESPITE A NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS, HE HAD FOUND ABSOLUTELY NO "GIVE" IN THE POSITION OF THE SOCIALIST LEADER, ANKER JORGENSEN, AND IT WAS DIFFICULT TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT IF BOTH SIDES WERE NOT WILLING TO COMPROMISE. WITHOUT ANY PROMPTING, HE ADDED THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF COMPROMISING WITH GLISTRUP. HE EXPLAINED THAT WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO DO WAS TO GAIN THE SUPPORT OF A GROUP OF CENTER PARTIES. IF HE MADE AN AGREEMENT WITH GLISTRUP, SEVERAL OF THESE CENTER PARTIES (THE RADICALS AND THE CHRISTIANS) HAVE TOLD HIM THEY WOULD WALK AWAY FROM HIM. "SO WHAT GOOD WOULD IT BE TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH GLISTRUP?" HE ASKED. HE HASTENED TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT IF HE FORMED A GOVERNMENT OF THE CENTER AND GLISTRUP WISHED TO SUPPORT IT, THAT WOULD BE WELCOME, BUT HE DID NOT FEEL THAT HE COULD MAKE ANY AGREEMENT WITH GLISTRUP. HE THOUGHT THE FIRST DIFFICULT PERIOD WOULD COME NEXT WEEK WHEN THERE WILL BE A GENERAL DEBATE ON HIS TAX PROGRAM. "IF WE ARE DEFEATED IN THE PARLIAMENT, WE WILL RESIGN," HE SAID.

4. COMMENT: SINCE I MADE MY ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION, TWO EVENTS HAVE STRENGTHENED MY CONVICTION THAT A VISIT BY HARTLING WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO US. THE FIRST IS HARTLING'S AMAZING PERSONAL VICTORY IN THE ELECTION (THE GREATEST INCREASE BY ANY DANISH PARTY IN HISTORY, HE TOLD ME) AND THE SECOND IS THE FRIENDLY AND EXCELLENT SPEECH ON EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS HE MADE THIS WEEK (COPENHAGEN 162). I KNOW HE WILL LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE VISIT SO I REQUEST THAT I BE INFORMED THE MOMENT A DECISION IS REACHED.

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